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ABSTRACT

Noting that outdoor play is a significant yet frequently overlooked aspect of young children's development, this book uses a framework of initiation, negotiation, and enactment to show how early childhood teachers can support self-directed pretend play and to connect theories of play and children's culture. The book's preface details the methodology of this study, conducted at an early childhood program on a university campus serving ethnically diverse 3- to 5-year-olds from middle- to upper-class families. Data were collected through videotapes of play yard activities, audiotapes of reviews of the videotapes by teachers, and field notes. Chapter One conceptualizes the play yard as a set of discrete expectations and cues for learning, details the model used for analysis, introduces the two experienced teachers involved in the study, and describes the classroom teaching culture. Chapters Two through Five provide anecdotal evidence of children who are working to establish friendships and feel in control of their thoughts and actions, highlighting how two teachers with the same philosophical orientation differ in their goal of maintaining the duration of a play episode. Chapter Six outlines teacher decisions and strategies used to create, preserve, and protect outdoor areas for play while honoring children's self-direction. Chapter Seven provides anecdotal evidence to illuminate the children's and the teachers' expectations for interacting in the play yard, emphasizing the point of rupture in peer play episodes as opportunities to confer acknowledgment, and negotiate meanings between the peer and teaching cultures. The book provides tools to advocate for children by providing language to identify a play episode sequence, playmates' intentions, and teachers' strategies for supporting children's learning during outdoor play. (Contains 67 references.) (KB)

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